

7th May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

As the impact of COVID takes hold, it seems to me that everyone is affected in some way. Although we cannot alter people's individual circumstances, there may be some tools which are useful to you or your family.

With this in mind, I thought I'd provide few links, or add information, which may be helpful for you or your children (many are on our website but there are a few additional ones):

- Financial concerns
 - Free School Meals (link for eligibility check and application:
<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/schools-and-colleges/free-school-meals/free-school-meals-online-application-form/?formcheck=checked>)
 - Food bank vouchers (the school can make referrals for these. Do call, in confidence, and ask to speak with me or leave a message if the phone is not manned at that moment)
- Mental health:
 - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-support-children-families-parents/> (NSPCC includes information about tensions at home, tantrums and care of mental health)
 - <https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm-zone/> (a wide range of ways to feel calm)
 - https://www.harting.w-sussex.sch.uk/storage/secure_download/NGNNQWFvYXc5SRXFXVFcZck9vYUwrdz09 (written by young people and parents – a mental health support guide)
 - https://www.harting.w-sussex.sch.uk/storage/secure_download/YkI3S3RNQ25VVGILelhUZU5NZ2pZZz09 (text message service for access to school nursing service, offering advice on behaviour and emotional health + other ills)
- Bereavement:
 - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-and-bereavement/> (this has some suggestions of ways of capturing memories and how to talk with children, along with other links and support agencies)
 - <https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/supporting-a-bereaved-child/> (a highly respected group with a range of ideas, books to support grieving children)
 - https://www.harting.w-sussex.sch.uk/storage/secure_download/Z2t4cU5raXJtaytkSG5KbjQ0T1JJUT09 (notes about bereavement, from training)

We, more than ever need to be resilient but sometimes there are things we need to do to help with this. The ideas below have been taken from some of the training, which staff have accessed recently:

Practical strategies to help children build resistance:

- ✓ Demonstrate coping skills, such as deep breathing when frustrated
- ✓ Go outside – exercise can help alleviate stress
- ✓ Teach that all feelings are important and that labelling their feelings can help a child make sense of what they are experiencing. Tell them it's ok to experience jealousy, sadness etc and that bad feelings usually pass.

- ✓ Promote healthy risk-taking, that is, pushing a child outside their comfort zone but results in little harm (emotional or physical) if they are unsuccessful.
- ✓ Promote the bright side- teach child to reframe thoughts and find the positive in things
- ✓ Embrace mistakes –theirs and yours. This promotes a growth mindset and gives children the recovered from it.
- ✓ Model resiliency when you encounter stressful situations. Label emotions and talk through your problem-solving process
- ✓ Encourage independent problem solving – children need to develop their own skills, dealing with any discomfort on the way. Instead of giving them a solution, ask questions, so they think through the issue. Brainstorm problems with children, and encourage children to weigh up the pros and cons of each solution
- ✓ Spend one-to –one time with child, so they are empowered to seek guidance

I shared these suggestions in case they may prove useful. They make me wish I had helped my children in some of these ways, rather than ‘helicoptering in’ to rescue them as I often did.

On another subject, I would like to thank everyone for encouraging or helping the children to send work to the class email accounts. We would still like to see **both** a piece of writing (it doesn’t need to be flash or based on our ideas) as well as something else they have done, which makes them proud, **every week**.

Please remember that we look forward to seeing happy, healthy children at the end of this time – the most important thing! Some work on the way would be great – tell the children that ‘Mrs M’ says that the teachers need something to do (they are going to love me for writing this)! For the record, they are not sitting twiddling their thumbs!!

We continue to miss all of you and hope that Boris may be able to release the children back into the Harting School ‘fold’ soon.

Take care

Fiona